

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5466
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JANUARY 24, 1978

AMERICANS MOVE SOUTH

ANNCR:

AMERICANS ARE LEAVING THE NORTHERN UNITED STATES AND HEADING SOUTH AND WEST, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST (1/23) STATISTICS COMPILED BY THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. LINDA CASHDAN TAKES A LOOK AT THE TREND.

VOICE:

CALIFORNIA SHOWS THE BIGGEST POPULATION INCREASE -- NEARLY TWO MILLION PEOPLE SINCE THE U.S. CENSUS WAS TAKEN IN 1970. FLORIDA AND TEXAS ARE CLOSE BEHIND. EACH OF THESE SOUTHERN STATES HAS ADDED MORE THAN ONE AND A HALF MILLION RESIDENTS IN THE LAST SEVEN YEARS. IN CONTRAST, THE POPULATION OF THE NORTHERN STATES LIKE NEW YORK, RHODE ISLAND, AND PENNSYLVANIA HAS ACTUALLY GONE DOWN OVER THE SAME PERIOD.

THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, AMERICA HAS BEEN A LAND OF POPULATION SHIFTS. ... BEGINNING WITH THE SPREAD OF THE THIRTEEN ORIGINAL COLONIES SOUTHWARD AND WESTWARD, CONTINUING DURING THE PIONEER DAYS WHEN SETTLERS MOVED OUT TO THE NEW TERRITORY IN THE FAR WEST. RECENT DECADES HAVE SEEN THE NATION'S POPULATION SHIFT FIRST FROM THE COUNTRY TO THE CITIES, AND THEN FROM THE CITIES TO THE SUBURBS.

TODAY'S DESTINATION APPEARS TO BE THE WARMTH AND COMFORT OF THE "SUNBELT", AND TODAY'S MIGRANTS ARE A VARIED LOT. THERE ARE THE RETIREES -- THE OLDER AMERICANS ON GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE PENSIONS WHO SEEK BOTH SUNSHINE AND AN ESCAPE FROM THE HIGH COST OF HOUSING AND FUEL IN THE NORTH.

SOME OF THE NEWCOMERS AREN'T NEWCOMERS AT ALL, BUT RATHER FORMER NATIVES WHO LEFT THE SOUTH DECADES AGO, MOTIVATED BY THE

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED NORTHERN CITIES. AND TODAY, THEY FIND THAT THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES LIE "BACK HOME." SO THEY ARE LEAVING THESE CITIES, WHICH HAVE BECOME ECONOMICALLY DEPRESSED, AND HEADING FOR THE NEW BOOMING TOWNS OF THE SOUTH.

THE MIGRATION HAS ALSO INVOLVED PROFESSIONALS, EDUCATORS, MANAGERS, AND EXECUTIVES WITH LARGE NATIONAL CONCERNS, WHO ARE GOING SOUTH IN SEARCH OF A WAY OF LIFE THAT IS A LITTLE SLOWER, A LITTLE MORE GRACIOUS, AND, IN MANY WAYS SIMPLY LESS FRENETIC THAN THE EXISTENCE OF NORTH CITIES.

AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS MIGRATED FROM ONE REGION TO ANOTHER IN SEARCH OF THE SO-CALLED "GOOD LIFE." BUT TODAY THE DEFINITION OF THE "GOOD LIFE" HAS CHANGED. YESTERDAY'S MIGRANTS WERE OFTEN POOR AMERICANS, TRAVELING TO A JOB CENTER. TODAY'S MIGRANTS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, ARE AFFLUENT, SEARCHING NOT SO MUCH FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY AS THEY ARE FOR TRANQUILITY. THE "GOOD LIFE" IS DEFINED IN TERMS OF QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY ... IT IS AN EXISTENCE OF CALM AND PEACE AND BEAUTY, A RELEASE FROM THE HECTIC PACE OF THE BIG CITY. PROOF OF THIS LIES IN SOME OTHER CENSUS STATISTICS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ONLY STATES IN THE NORTH THAT HAVE BUCKED THE TREND OF OUTWARD MIGRATION IN RECENT YEARS ARE MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, AND VERMONT. THE LEAST DEVELOPED AND MOST MOUNTAINOUS, RUSTIC, AND BEAUTIFUL OF THE STATES IN THE NORTHEASTERN UNITED STATES. YOUNG PEOPLE ESPECIALLY SEEM TO BE MOVING THERE. THE IRONY, OF COURSE, IS THAT THE RUSTIC CHARMS THAT ATTRACT MAY DISAPPEAR IF THE TREND CONTINUES.

(OPT) THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF POLITICAL POWER SHIFTS TOO. THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, AFTER ALL, MUST REFLECT THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE U.S. POPULATION. AND IF THE TREND CONTINUES, FLORIDA AND TEXAS WOULD EACH GAIN TWO SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

AND ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, OREGON, AND TENNESSEE WOULD EACH GAIN ONE. NEW YORK, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD LOSE THREE SEATS, OHIO WOULD LOST TWO, AND ILLINOIS, MICHIGAN, PENNSYLVANIA, AND SOUTH DAKOTA WOULD EACH LOSE ONE. (END OPT)

JS/PY